

DS 195

. 215

1920b

copy 2



MANDATE FOR ARMENIA.

MESSAGE

FROM THE

PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES,

REQUESTING

THAT THE CONGRESS GRANT THE EXECUTIVE POWER TO ACCEPT  
FOR THE UNITED STATES A MANDATE FOR ARMENIA.

MAY 24, 1920.—Read; referred to the Committee on Foreign Affairs, and ordered  
to be printed.

GENTLEMEN OF THE CONGRESS:

On the fourteenth of May an official communication was received at the Executive Office from the Secretary of the Senate of the United States conveying the following preambles and resolutions:

Whereas the testimony adduced at the hearings conducted by the subcommittee of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations have clearly established the truth of the reported massacres and other atrocities from which the Armenian people have suffered; and

Whereas the people of the United States are deeply impressed by the deplorable conditions of insecurity, starvation, and misery now prevalent in Armenia; and

Whereas the independence of the Republic of Armenia has been duly recognized by the Supreme Council of the Peace Conference and by the Government of the United States of America: Therefore be it

*Resolved*, That the sincere congratulations of the Senate of the United States are hereby extended to the people of Armenia on the recognition of the independence of the Republic of Armenia, without prejudice respecting the territorial boundaries involved: And be it further

*Resolved*, That the Senate of the United States hereby expresses the hope that stable government, proper protection of individual liberties and rights, and the full realization of nationalistic aspirations may soon be attained by the Armenian people: And be it further

*Resolved*, That in order to afford necessary protection for the lives and property of citizens of the United States at the port of Batum and along the line of the railroad leading to Baku, the President is hereby requested, if not incompatible with the public interest, to cause a United States warship and a force of marines to be dispatched to such port with instructions to such marines to disembark and to protect American lives and property.

154-265  
1900-8  
201-42

I received and read this document with great interest and with genuine gratification, not only because it embodied my own convictions and feelings with regard to Armenia and its people, but also, and more particularly, because it seemed to me the voice of the American people expressing their genuine convictions and deep Christian sympathies, and intimating the line of duty which seemed to them to lie clearly before us.

I cannot but regard it as providential, and not as a mere casual coincidence that almost at the same time I received information that the conference of statesmen now sitting at San Remo for the purpose of working out the details of peace with the Central Powers which it was not feasible to work out in the conference at Paris, had formally resolved to address a definite appeal to this Government to accept the mandate for Armenia. They were at pains to add that they did this, "not from the smallest desire to evade any obligations which they might be expected to undertake, but because the responsibilities which they are already obliged to bear in connection with the disposition of the former Ottoman Empire will strain their capacities to the uttermost, and because they believe that the appearance on the scene of a power emancipated from the prepossessions of the old world will inspire a wider confidence and afford a firmer guarantee for stability in the future than would the selection of any European power."

Early in the conferences at Paris it was agreed that to those colonies and territories which as a consequence of the late war have ceased to be under the sovereignty of the States which formerly governed them and which are inhabited by peoples not yet able to stand by themselves under the strenuous conditions of the modern world there should be applied the principle that the well being and development of such peoples form a sacred trust of civilization, and that securities for the performance of this trust should be afforded.

It was recognized that certain communities formerly belonging to the Turkish Empire have reached a stage of development where their existence as independent nations can be provisionally recognized, subject to the rendering of administrative advice and assistance by a mandatory until such time as they are able to stand alone.

It is in pursuance of this principle and with a desire of affording Armenia such advice and assistance that the statesmen conferring at San Remo have formally requested this Government to assume the duties of mandatory in Armenia. I may add, for the information of the Congress, that at the same sitting it was resolved to request the President of the United States to undertake to arbitrate the difficult question of the boundary between Turkey and Armenia in the Vilayets of Erzerum, Trebizond, Van and Bitlis, and it was agreed to accept his decision thereupon, as well as any stipulation he may prescribe as to access to the sea for the independent State of Armenia. In pursuance of this action, it was resolved to embody in the Treaty with Turkey, now under final consideration, a provision that "Turkey and Armenia and the other High Contracting Parties agree to refer to the arbitration of the President of the United States of America the question of the boundary between Turkey and Armenia in the Vilayets of Erzerum, Trebizond, Van and Bitlis, and to accept his decision thereupon as well as any stipulation he may prescribe as to access to the sea for the independent State of Armenia;" pending

that decision the boundaries of Turkey and Armenia to remain as at present. I have thought it my duty to accept this difficult and delicate task.

In response to the invitation of the Council at San Remo, I urgently advise and request that the Congress grant the Executive power to accept for the United States a mandate over Armenia. I make this suggestion in the earnest belief that it will be the wish of the people of the United States that this should be done. The sympathy with Armenia has proceeded from no single portion of our people, but has come with extraordinary spontaneity and sincerity from the whole of the great body of Christian men and women in this country by whose free-will offerings Armenia has practically been saved at the most critical juncture of its existence. At their hearts this great and generous people have made the cause of Armenia their own. It is to this people and to their Government that the hopes and earnest expectations of the struggling people of Armenia turn as they now emerge from a period of indescribable suffering and peril, and I hope that the Congress will think it wise to meet this hope and expectation with the utmost liberality. I know from unmistakable evidences given by responsible representatives of many peoples struggling towards independence and peaceful life again that the Government of the United States is looked to with extraordinary trust and confidence, and I believe that it would do nothing less than arrest the hopeful processes of civilization if we were to refuse the request to become the helpful friends and advisers of such of these people as we may be authoritatively and formally requested to guide and assist.

I am conscious that I am urging upon the Congress a very critical choice, but I make the suggestion in the confidence that I am speaking in the spirit and in accordance with the wishes of the greatest of the Christian peoples. The sympathy for Armenia among our people has sprung from untainted consciences, pure Christian faith, and an earnest desire to see Christian people everywhere succored in their time of suffering, and lifted from their abject subjection and distress and enabled to stand upon their feet and take their place among the free nations of the world. Our recognition of the independence of Armenia will mean genuine liberty and assured happiness for her people, if we fearlessly undertake the duties of guidance and assistance involved in the functions of a mandatory. It is, therefore, with the most earnest hopefulness and with the feeling that I am giving advice from which the Congress will not willingly turn away that I urge the acceptance of the invitation now formally and solemnly extended to us by the Council at San Remo, into whose hands has passed the difficult task of composing the many complexities and difficulties of government in the one-time Ottoman Empire and the maintenance of order and tolerable conditions of life in those portions of that Empire which it is no longer possible in the interest of civilization to leave under the government of the Turkish authorities themselves.

WOODROW WILSON.

THE WHITE HOUSE, 24 May, 1920.



LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



0 019 612 986 8